NATSUMI ANDO

7

Something's Wrong With Us

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STORY & CHARACTERS

Desperate to investigate the truth about her late mother, Nao hides who she really is and marries Tsubaki. Having overcome a myriad of obstacles together with Tsubaki, Nao finally feels like she has gotten through to him and that she has enough faith in their love for each other to tell him that she is pregnant.

But then, she discovers that her mother was once romantically involved with Tsubaki's late father, the former young master of Kogetsuan who was murdered 15 years ago. What's worse, he is none other than Nao's real father.

Tsubaki Takatsuki
The heir to the historic *wagashi* shop Kogetsuan. Proposed to Nao without realizing that they were once childhood friends.

Nao Hanaoka
A *wagashi* confectioner. Finds meaning in life by making *wagashi* that connect her to her late mother.

Tsubaki used to call her "Sakura" back when they were children. Seeing the color red gives her severe heart palpitations.

Old Master Takatsuki
Tsubaki's grandfather. The head of Kogetsuan. Mistreats Tsubaki because he is convinced that Tsubaki isn't his real grandson.

The Proprietress
Tsubaki's mother. Ever since she lost her husband (Tsubaki's father) 15 years ago, she has been desperate to make Tsubaki the head of Kogetsuan.

CHAPTER 31 *The Visitor*

I CAN'T...

...MARRY TSUBAKI.

SST

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

...

I THINK I REMEMBER IT FROM SOME-WHERE...

...LONG AGO...

T-TO THE KITCHEN,

THOUGH IT'S A LITTLE EARLY.

WE'RE MAKING *AYUYAKI* TODAY, RIGHT?

I SHOULD GO CRACK THE EGGS.

NAO.

ARE YOU—

I'VE NEVER SEEN THE OLD MASTER'S FACE LOOK LIKE THAT BEFORE.

NO, NEVER MIND.

I'LL BE THERE AS SOON AS I GET DRESSED.

S-SURE.

A GIRL NAMED SAKURA MADE IT.

IS THAT SO...

NEVER...?

NO.

THERE WAS THAT ONE TIME...

...

A SIMPLE INVESTIGATION MIGHT CLARIFY...

...WHETHER NAO IS REALLY...

IT'S A SUSPICION...

...THAT I'VE ALREADY DISMISSED ONCE...

AND PUT A LID ON.

YOU HAVE A VISITOR.

COME WITH ME.

TSUBAKI-SAN.

ぽたぽた

...I REALLY HAVE NOBODY TO TURN TO.

IN TIMES LIKE THESE...

I ALSO CAN'T IMPOSE ON MY FRIENDS.

I DOUBT SHE COULD AFFORD TO DO THAT.

YUKO-SAN...?

WOULD ANYONE HIRE SOMEONE LIKE ME SO SUDDENLY?

I'LL HAVE TO FIND A JOB, TOO.

WHERE COULD I POSSIBLY GO?

BUT IF I LEAVE,

I CAN'T STAY HERE ANYMORE.

I'LL BE WATCHING OVER YOU.

WHO IS THIS VISITOR?

SO...

YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN HER, HAVE YOU?

IT'S SHIORI-SAN FROM HASEYA.

...

SHE'S THE FIANCÉE...

YOU WERE ORIGINALLY SUPPOSED TO MARRY.

SHIORI-SAN...

I'M SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING, SHIORI-SAN.

SHE MUST NOT EVEN WANT TO SEE MY FACE, SO WHY IS SHE HERE...?

WHAT'S THIS ALL OF A SUDDEN?

...SINCE I RUINED THE WEDDING.

I HAVEN'T SEEN HER...

I'M TRULY SORRY FOR WHAT HAP-PENED.

I REALIZE THAT MY SELFISH ACTIONS... MUST HAVE CAUSED SO MUCH TROUBLE FOR THE HASEYA INN.

SWEAT

SWEAT

SHIORI-SAN?

THINKING BACK, IT WAS PROBABLY A GOOD THING THAT WE DIDN'T GET MARRIED THEN.

AND I DON'T THINK IT WOULD HAVE WORKED OUT...

IT WAS OUR FAMILIES WHO MADE THE DECISION,

UM...

PLEASE DON'T APOLOGIZE, TSUBAKI-SAN.

GAASP はぅ

HHGH

HHGH

A-ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

I'M SORRY!

I WAS SO NER-VOUS... I FOR-GOT TO BREATHE ...

I WOULD LOVE TO BE ABLE TO BUY *WAGASHI* HERE LIKE I USED TO.

SO, UH... IF IT ISN'T A PROB-LEM...

OF COURSE, IF YOU YOURSELF DON'T MIND.

REALLY?

THE ONLY THING IS...

I'M SAD THAT I DON'T GET TO EAT KOGETSUAN'S SWEETS ANYMORE.

THEY'RE MY FAVORITE.

THERE'S SOMETHING I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW...

OH, NO...

IS THAT WHY YOU CAME HERE TODAY?

I'M SO GLAD ...

BUT, TSUBAKI-SAN...

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CRIME THAT NAO-SAN'S MOTHER COMMITTED?

YOU'RE GOING TO MARRY THAT LADY RIGHT, TSUBAKI-SAN?

NAO-SAN...

WAS IT?

SHE SEEMS SO POISED AND SELF-ASSURED.

WHAT...?

WELL...

THERE'S A *WAGASHI* SHOP THAT MY FATHER FREQUENTS IN KOMATSU...

...AND I HEARD THAT A CONFECTIONER NAMED "NAO HANAOKA" WORKED THERE UNTIL THIS SPRING.

APPARENTLY THEY GOT DISTURBING MESSAGES ON A DAILY BASIS.

"NAO HANAOKA'S MOTHER IS A MURDERER."

MESSAGES THAT SAID...

...SO I...

SHIORI-SAN.

...BUT I COULDN'T HELP BUT BE WORRIED...

IT MAY NOT BE THE SAME PERSON YOU'RE ABOUT TO MARRY...

I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN.

BUT THAT'S NOT THE NAO I KNOW.

IF THAT'S ALL, YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME.

I SHOULD GET BACK TO WORK.

OH...

I'M NAO HANAOKA.

NOT "SAKURA."

I'M GOING TO TRUST HER...

I'VE DECIDED TO TRUST YOU.

KNOCK

I TRUST HER.

SHIORI-SAN.

DO YOU, BY ANY CHANCE ... STILL HAVE FEELINGS FOR TSUBAKI?

...!

WHAT?

OH, NO.

I...

IF YOU DO...

...IT'S BEST YOU LEAVE RIGHT AWAY.

FALLING FOR SOMEONE WHOSE HEART BELONGS TO ANOTHER...

...IS A PATH FILLED WITH THORNS...

...THAT NEVER, EVER ENDS.

RUN AWAY...

...WHILE YOU STILL CAN.

Sign: Takigawa

THERE YOU GO.

HE'S RIGHT IN HERE.

GRIN

THE *TEISHU** FROM THE SOKUNKAI GAVE ME YOUR ADDRESS...

I'M AMAZED IT'S SUCH A HUGE ESTATE.

I'M SORRY FOR THE SUDDEN VISIT.

I'M SURPRISED YOU KNEW WHERE TO FIND ME.

*The host of a tea ceremony.

I JUST DABBLE IN IT, BUT YES.

WAS THAT TRADITIONAL JAPANESE DANCE?

はHA はHA はHA

I ACTUALLY GET LOST IN HERE SOME-TIMES.

WELL, BEING SINGLE, I REALLY DON'T NEED MORE THAN TWO ROOMS.

OR, HOW...

OR HOW THE NEIGHBORS ARE MAKING STEW FOR DINNER.

LIKE HOW THE CHANGING WIND IS ABOUT TO BRING RAIN...

OR HOW THE SWALLOWS ARE HERALDING SPRING...

WHEN I DANCE, IT HONES MY SENSES AND HELPS ME PICK UP ON ALL SORTS OF THINGS.

YOU CAME BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME, RIGHT?

...IT LOOKS LIKE...

...YOU'RE TROUBLED, NAO-CHAN.

UM...

IS THERE ANYONE YOU KNOW...

WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO HIRE ME AND KEEP IT A SECRET?

AND, WITH A LIVE-IN ARRANGEMENT, IF POSSIBLE.

I'LL DO ANYTHING.

HUH ...?

I'LL WORK REALLY HARD...

WAIT— HOLD ON.

WHY...?

...

I'M NOT GOING TO MARRY TSUBAKI-SAN.

...

BUT WHY?

DON'T YOU HAVE YOUR WEDDING SOON?

HELP ME...

PLEASE.

OKAY.

I HAVE SOME RELATIVES WHO HAPPEN TO BE LOOK-ING FOR HELP.

I'LL ASK THEM.

I MEANT RIGHT NOW.

YES.

AS EARLY AS TOMOR-ROW—

REALLY?!

CAN YOU START RIGHT AWAY?

THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO GO BACK.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE KOGETSUAN, THE EARLIER THE BETTER.

MY THINGS...

BUT...

I'LL HAVE SOMEONE GO RETRIEVE THEM.

BUT...

B...

"RIGHT NOW"...?

BUT...

...YOU HAVE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS?

NAO-CHAN.

THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS REGRETTED.

...

...WHEN CAMELLIA-THEMED SWEETS WERE OUT WITH THE ONSET OF SPRING...

BUT... THAT WINTER 15 YEARS AGO...

I TOLD YOU... HOW MY FATHER BOUGHT YOUR MOTHER'S SWEETS EVERY MONTH, RIGHT?

...MY FATHER WAS TOO BUSY THAT MONTH TO GO TO KOGETSUAN.

...AND I FIGURED WE COULD JUST LOOK FORWARD TO IT THE FOLLOWING YEAR.

BUT I FELT A LITTLE SELF-CONSCIOUS...

I COULD HAVE GONE IN HIS PLACE,

HOWEVER, THAT OPPORTUNITY NEVER CAME.

IF YOU LEAVE THAT HOUSEHOLD NOW...

...ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T REGRET IT?

I REGRET-TED...

...NOT GOING TO KOGETSUAN MORE AND GETTING TO KNOW HER.

光

IF I HAD...

...THEN MAYBE I'D STILL BE EATING HER SWEETS TODAY.

I STILL HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT...

...THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED 15 YEARS AGO.

SO, WHAT STOPPED THEM FROM BEING TOGETHER?

...IT SEEMED LIKE THEY HAD BEEN IN LOVE FOR A LONG TIME.

BASED ON THOSE LETTERS I FOUND...!

ALL TSUBAKI SAW...

...WAS THAT MOMMA HAD BEEN IN THE YOUNG MASTER'S ROOM.

WHY—

WHO'S THIS?

IS EVERY-THING ALL RIGHT?

...

THESE FIRE-FLIES...

THEY LIGHT UP TO ATTRACT MATES...

AS IF THEY'RE SAYING, "LOOK, HERE I AM!"...

...ALL WHILE USING UP THEIR LIFE ENERGY.

THAT DAY, 15 YEARS AGO...

IF I COULD BE LIKE THAT...

...WOULD I WIN OVER THE PERSON I LOVE, TOO?

...THAT MOST WANTED THE YOUNG MASTER GONE...?

...WHO WAS IT...

WHO...?

CHAPTER 32 *The Locked Door*

WAIT, ARE YOU...

S...

...HASEYA-SAN'S—?

SORRY!!

AAAH! I'M SO SORRY!!

MUD EVERYWHERE

OH, NO

OH...

OH, DEAR!

IF YOU TAKE IT OFF, I'LL GO GET IT CLEANED RIGHT AWAY.

WIPE

WIPE

NO, THAT'S NOT OKAY—

DON'T WORRY, IT'S CHEAP.

NO, IT'S OKAY!

I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT HAPPENED ...

I'M GETTING MARRIED.

UM, I REALLY AM SORRY.

I HAD SOMETHING I NEEDED TO TELL TSUBAKI-SAN,

BUT I PROMISE IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.

I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME WHILE YOU WERE OUT, NAO-SAN...

IT WAS ARRANGED JUST THE OTHER DAY.

HE'S KIND AND SINCERE,

AND I CAN TELL HE REALLY CARES ABOUT ME.

THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO ASK OF YOU, NAO-SAN.

UM...

"EVERY YEAR" ...?

WOULD IT BE OKAY FOR ME TO COME TO KOGETSUAN'S TEA CEREMONY THREE DAYS FROM NOW?

CLENCH

I LOOK FORWARD TO IT EVERY YEAR.

BUT I'M LEAVING KANAZAWA WHEN I GET MARRIED, SO THIS YEAR'S MY LAST CHANCE...

IT'S FINE BY ME. PLEASE GO AHEAD.

TH... THEN...

ARE YOU SURE?

I... ...

...HAVE NO RIGHT TO SAY NO.

I'M SO GLAD.

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

UM, I'M SURE I'VE FOUND MY HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

SO...

UH...

I HOPE THE TWO OF YOU WILL BE HAPPY, TOO...

SHE'S THE ONE...

...WHO'S DELICATE LIKE SAKURA BLOSSOMS...*

THE GIRL FROM HASEYA INN...

"SHIORI-SAN."

I THINK...

OH!

LOOK OUT...!

***The Japanese cherry.**

SHE HAD TO SUFFER...

...FOR ME TO GET ACCESS TO KOGETSUAN.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T REGRET IT?

...

...IN THE YOUNG MASTER'S ROOM.

CREAK

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME...

...WAS KOGETSUAN'S MAIN HOUSE...

IT WAS...

...BEYOND THIS GARDEN, IF I REMEMBER RIGHT.

HAAH

HAAH

I WENT THROUGH HERE TO GET TO TSUBAKI'S ROOM.

THAT MORNING...

I CAN'T BREATHE.

I'M SEEING RED...

HAAH

HAAH

...!

I HAVE TO GO.

I HAVE TO.

HHGH

I HEARD THAT THE KNIFE ON THE FLOOR NEAR THE YOUNG MASTER'S BODY...

...HAD MOMMA'S FINGERPRINTS ON IT.

MOMMA DIED DURING THE INVESTI-GATION...

ALSO, THERE WERE APPARENTLY NO OTHER SUSPECTS.

...AND THE CASE WAS ABANDONED.

IS THAT REALLY THE CASE, THOUGH?

...DID I REALLY JUST SEE TSUBAKI AND THE YOUNG MASTER?

ON THAT DAY...

WHAT IF..

MY MEMORY OF THAT DAY IS HAZY.

WHOOSH

...I'VE FORGOTTEN SOMETHING ...?

WHAT ABOUT FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE...?

HR CLATTER

HR CLATTER

IT'S COMPLETE-LY SEALED SHUT.

NAO-SAN?

YAMA-GUCHI-SAN...

I WAS WONDER-ING...

UH... HOW MANY PEOPLE COULD FIT IN THIS WHOLE HOUSE...

...DURING THE WED-DING...

OH, UM...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

THEN THERE'S NO POINT IN GOING ANY FURTHER.

WHATEVER'S BEYOND THAT DOOR...

NO ONE IS ALLOWED INSIDE.

...WAS SEALED OFF BY THE OLD MASTER.

...

I THINK SO.

...

HAS IT BEEN CLOSED OFF FOR THE ENTIRE 15 YEARS?

YES.

EXCEPT FOR ON A SPECIAL DAY.

IS IT BE-CAUSE ...

...THAT'S WHERE...

...SOMETHING HORRIBLE HAPPENED?

THE OLD MASTER...

...THE OLD MASTER HAS A SINGLE BOWL OF TEA IN THAT ROOM...

ONCE A YEAR, AFTER THE TEA CEREMONY...

"A SPECIAL DAY"?

...AS IF TO SHARE A MOMENT WITH HIS LATE SON.

THE ANNUAL TEA CEREMONY.

ON THE DAY OF THE TEA CEREMONY...

...THE ROOM WILL BE UNLOCKED...

I HAVE TO LEAVE THIS PLACE BEFORE THE WEDDING...

IF IT'S DURING THE TEA CEREMONY...

...I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SNEAK IN WITHOUT GETTING NOTICED.

...SO I HAVE TO UNCOVER THE TRUTH BEFORE THEN.

BY THE WAY...

TSUBAKI DID...?

I...
I SEE.

IF HE'S ABLE TO, THEN THAT'S FOR THE BEST, RIGHT?

HUH...?

THAT REMINDS ME.

TSUBAKI-SAN SAID HE WOULD MAKE THE SWEETS FOR THE TEA CEREMONY...

...BUT WAS THAT OKAY WITH YOU?

WHAT?

WELL...

I'M SENSING A RIFT BETWEEN YOU TWO AGAIN...

IS EVERY-THING ALL RIGHT?

IT FEELS LIKE TSUBAKI-SAN HAS CHANGED.

...THAT LATELY...

YOU KNOW, IT MADE ME A LITTLE HAPPY...

TSUBAKI-SAN MIGHT DENY IT...

...BUT IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, NAO-SAN.

I HAD ONLY EVER SEEN TSUBAKI-SAN LOOK STERN, BUT NOW...

...I'VE SEEN HIM LOOK SURPRISED ...

...AN-GRY...

...HAPPY...

HE NOW MAKES ALL SORTS OF OTHER EXPRESSIONS.

EXCUSE ME.

I HOPE YOU'LL ALWAYS BE THERE, BY HIS SIDE.

WHAT IS THIS *KINTON* CALLED?

IT'S CALLED "UCHIMIZU."

IT'S PERFECT FOR THE SUMMER—

THEN I'LL TAKE FIVE OF THESE.

COULD I GET THEM WRAPPED AS A GIFT?

OF COURSE.

...

O...

YOU KNOW...

MAYBE I SHOULD STOP BY THE SHOP MORE OFTEN, TOO.

THANK YOU FOR WAITING.

I'M SO GLAD I FOUND SOMETHING I LIKED.

OF COURSE.

WELL, BYE FOR NOW.

...YOU SHOULD COME OVER SOMETIME...

AND SAY HELLO AT MY FATHER'S ALTAR, KYOKO-SAN.

I'M SURE HE WOULD LIKE THAT.

CLATTER

...

WHY ARE YOU WATCHING ME FROM THERE?

FROM YAMAGU-CHI-SAN?

YEAH.

I...

I HEARD YOU WOULD BE HERE.

IT'S NOTH-ING.

...

I JUST HAD SOME EXTRA TIME.

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

WHY?

...WERE OUT AWFULLY EARLY THIS MORNING.

YOU...

BA-DUMP

...WHEN YOU WANT TO SOOTHE YOUR MIND, DON'T YOU?

YOU PRACTICE TEA...

THAT'S ONE PRICELESS EXPRESSION.

WHAT?!

YOU *HAVE* PUT ON SOME WEIGHT, ACTUALLY.

I'M A LITTLE OUT OF SHAPE.

THE KITCHEN IS CLOSED TODAY, SO I WENT FOR A WALK.

OH... Y- YEAH.

HE WOULDN'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT...

I WISH...

SHIORI-SAN COULD HAVE STAYED BY TSUBAKI'S SIDE...

WHY WOULD YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

YOU COULD'VE BEEN ENJOYING A MARRIED LIFE WITH HER RIGHT NOW, WITHOUT ANY OF THIS DRAMA, HUH?

O...

OH, BY THE WAY...

...I MET SHIORI-SAN YESTERDAY.

I'LL STOP DISTURBING YOU.

S-SORRY...

...WH—

WHAT'S THIS ALL OF A SUDDEN ...?

...

DO I NEED A REASON?

YOU'RE GOING TO BE MINE.

HEY...

SUCH A FIERY KISS...

LIKE...

HE'S TRYING TO LEAVE A MARK ON ME...

...

MOON-FLOWERS.

WHAT KIND OF SWEET...

...WILL YOU MAKE FOR THE TEA CEREMONY?

MOONFLOWERS...

THEY'RE FLOWERS THAT ONLY LAST A NIGHT...

THUS SYMBOLIZING EPHEMERAL LOVE...

I WANT TO STAY BY HIS SIDE...

AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

JUST A MINUTE...

JUST A SECOND LONGER...

Scroll: *Fumôgokai,*
"Thou shall not have a dishonest soul."

THIS IS YET ANOTHER ADDITION...

...TO MY SINS...

THANK YOU SO MUCH,

UMESAKURA-SAMA
DOI-SAMA
NAGANAWA-SAMA
MIYAJI-SAMA
MORIZANE-SAMA
CHIKADA-SAMA
AND MY EDITOR

I'M LEAVING MY COMMENTS HERE SINCE THERE WASN'T ANY SPACE AT THE BACK OF THIS VOLUME.

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR *WAGASHI*-THEMED STUFF EVERYWHERE, BUT THERE ISN'T A LOT AROUND, WHICH MAKES ME SAD... BUT THEN ONE OF MY READERS SENT ME SOME STICKY NOTES WITH *WAGASHI* ILLUSTRATIONS THAT WERE SUPER CUTE. I WISH THERE WERE MORE *WAGASHI* GOODS LIKE THAT OUT THERE! ANOTHER READER FROM KANAZAWA SAID THAT THEIR CHILD HAS A *WAGASHI*-MAKING CLASS AT THEIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AND THE READER EVEN SENT ME A NICE OVERVIEW COMPLETE WITH PICTURES, WHICH WAS AMAZING. I BET TSUBAKI ALSO MADE THEM LIKE THAT WHEN HE WAS AT HIS MOST INNOCENT... PROBABLY...

THANK YOU ALSO FOR ALL THE SUPPORT AND COMMENTS I GET THROUGH YOUR LETTERS.

TODAY, I'LL HAVE HIM DECIDE ONCE AND FOR ALL...

...WHO'S GOING TO INHERIT KOGETSUAN ...!

PLEASE HOLD ON, MA'AM!

WHERE IS FATHER?

HE'S IN HIS ROOM, ISN'T HE?

CHAPTER 33 *Tea Gathering at Sundown*

A VISITOR?

THE OLD MASTER...

...HAS A VISITOR AT THE MOMENT.

HERE IT IS, DRAFTED AS DISCUSSED.

Last Will and Testament of Sojuro Takatsuki

1. I bequeath all of my fortune to my grandson, Tsubaki Takatsuki (born M. ., 1996). However, if a true biological grandchild of the Takatsuki bloodline is ever found, all of my fortune will instead go to that grandchild.

2.1 I appoint Takatsuki to be in charge of anything related to

2.2 If the Executor of this, my Last Will and Testament, is no longer

3. I declare

and testament

I BEQUEATH ALL OF MY FORTUNE TO MY GRANDSON, TSUBAKI TAKA-TSUKI.

ARTICLE 1.

I, SOJURO TAKATSUKI, HEREBY DECLARE THIS TO BE MY LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT.

...ALL OF MY FORTUNE WILL INSTEAD GO TO THAT GRAND-CHILD.

HOW-EVER...

...IF A TRUE BIOLOGICAL GRANDCHILD OF THE TAKATSUKI BLOODLINE IS EVER FOUND...

SO, ABOUT DIVULGING THE EXISTENCE OF THIS WILL TO YOUR FAMILY—

カタ CLATTER

A FLAWLESS WILL.

WHATEVER HAPPENS TO ME NOW, I CAN REST IN PEACE.

WH...

WHAT IS THIS...?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO ACKNOW-LEDGE THAT?!

HE'S THE ONLY ONE WITH THE RIGHT TO INHERIT KOGETSU-AN!

FATHER!

TSUBAKI *IS* THE RIGHTFUL HEIR!!

AMIDST THE SWELTERING HEAT...

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU SAY.

IT'S MY DECISION TO MAKE.

...THE DAY OF THE OLD MASTER'S TEA CEREMONY APPROACHES...

EVERY YEAR DURING FURO SEASON ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF KOGETSUAN'S FOUNDING, THE OLD MASTER HOSTS HIS ANNUAL "TEA GATHERING AT SUNDOWN."

GUESTS GATHER IN THE EVENING...

TO ENJOY THE SETTING SUN AND THE LANTERNS LIGHTING UP AT NIGHT FOR A VISUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY PLEASING TEA CEREMONY EXPERIENCE.

IT LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT RAIN TODAY.

I HEARD THERE MIGHT BE A THUNDER-STORM.

THE DOOR TO THE MAIN ENTRANCE IS OPENED JUST A CRACK...

...TO SIGNAL THE START OF THE EVENT.

WE'LL CARRY OUT THE FOOD FIRST.

THE OLD MASTER WILL SERVE THE *SHOKYAKU**, SO SERVE THE REST OF THE GUESTS IN ORDER.

*The principle guest in a tea ceremony.

I KNOW.

I HAVE ALL THE PROPER ETIQUETTE NAILED DOWN.

FWP

...THAT ROOM WILL BE UNLOCKED ...

PROBABLY ONLY FOR A MOMENT, THOUGH...

AND TODAY'S THE DAY...

I HAVE TO MAKE SURE I DON'T MISS IT.

LOOK AT THOSE TWO.

YOU'RE A VALUABLE GUEST, LIKE EVERYONE HERE.

I HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR EVENING.

TSUBAKI-SAN.

UM... I'M SORRY FOR COMING HERE...

BUT...

UH...

NAO-SAN GAVE ME PERMISSION, SO—

HOW SHAMELESS AND THICK-SKINNED!

WHISPER

WHISPER

THEY WOULD HAVE MADE SUCH A NICE COUPLE...

LOOK.

IT'S THAT GIRL, RIGHT?

YES, AND ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING, TOO.

PARDON MY INTER-RUPTION...

...BUT ARE YOU AWARE OF HOW THICK THE ROOTS OF A SAKURA TREE ARE?

IT'S FINE.

JUST IGNORE THEM.

WHISPER

WHISPER

...THE THICKER THE ROOTS,

THE MORE BEAUTIFUL AND FULL OF BLOSSOMS THE TREE TENDS TO BE...

THEY SOMETIMES EVEN BREAK THROUGH CONCRETE.

WHAT'S MORE...

...TO MAKE IT IN THIS HOUSEHOLD.

THAT'S HOW THICK A PERSON'S SKIN NEEDS TO BE...

SO KO-GETSUAN HAS A PROMISING FUTURE...

...WITH THE ADDITION OF ITS NEW BRIDE.

I SEE.

TAKIGAWA-SAN...

GRIN

OLD MASTER.

UM... ABOUT EARLIER...

...

YOUR COLLAR'S COMING APART.

!

HE STOOD UP FOR ME?

BUT WHY?

IT'S NOT BECAUSE HE SUSPECTS WHO I AM, RIGHT...?

THIS IS THE MOON-FLOWER *WAGASHI*?

YES.

I WANTED TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF THE MOON FLOATING IN THE NIGHT SKY ABOVE MOON-FLOWERS IN BLOOM.

INSIDE IS YELLOW BEAN PASTE.

THE MOON-FLOWER ...

AND THE MOON ...

...REVEALS THE GLOWING YELLOW INSIDE.

SLICING THE SWEET OPEN...

THAT FIREFLY *JO-NAMAGASHI* YOU MADE...

HUH?

...

IT'S BEAUTI-FUL...

JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT TSUBAKI TO MAKE...

TSUBAKI-SAN, CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?

NOTH-ING.

NEVER MIND.

...

JOJIMA-KUN.

HOW DOES HE MAKE THESE LINES?

THEY'RE SO PERFECT, IT'S INFURIATING.

Uniform: Kogetsu

I DON'T THINK...

I'LL EVER BE A MATCH FOR HIM, EITHER.

NO WAY. I COULDN'T RECREATE THEM EVEN IF HE TOLD ME HOW.

WHY DON'T YOU ASK HIM?

I'LL STICK TO MAKING MY OWN SWEETS.

THAT'S TRUE.

ONLY TSUBAKI-SAN CAN CREATE THESE LINES.

NAO-SAN?

ALL OF THE SWEETS THAT TSUBAKI MAKES...

I WANT TO BURN THEM INTO MY MEMORY...

RUMBLE

RUMBLE

AFTER THE OMOGASHI...

WHERE IS IT?

WHERE ...?

...COMES A SHORT BREAK...

BEFORE THE LATTER HALF OF THE EVENT.

WHERE DID HE—?

FLASH

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM?!

FATHER...

WILL

YOU THOUGHT...

I CAN'T TRUST YOU FOR A SECOND.

I WOULD BE PREOCCUPIED DURING THE TEA CEREMONY, DIDN'T YOU?

I...I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE HERE.

YOU COULD HAVE SAID SOME-THING...

WILL

IS THIS WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?

...THAT NIGHT YOU FIRST GAVE ME REASON TO MISTRUST YOU...

...

THE WEATHER WAS JUST LIKE THIS...

ゴロ RUMBLE

ゴロ RUMBLE

I WAS LATE COMING BACK FROM A TEA CEREMONY...

CLATTER

...AND I DECIDED TO GO BACK TO MY ROOM THROUGH THE GARDEN.

SAY...

TSUBAKI LOOKS LIKE HIM, DOESN'T HE?

LIKE THAT MAN...?

...!

THE MOMENT I REAL-IZED...

THE MAN YOU WERE WITH WASN'T ITSUKI...

...I SAW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, A BEAST WHERE A PERSON SHOULD BE.

WILL

...THAT WILL!!

HAND OVER...

GIVE ME THAT...!

WHY DID YOU BETRAY US?!

I WAS THE ONE WHO ENDORSED YOU TO BE MY SON'S BRIDE 25 YEARS AGO!

THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T KICK YOU OUT!

THE DAUGHTER OF THE OTORI FAMILY, ONE OF THE THREE NOBLE HOUSES OF THE FORMER KAGA DOMAIN.

...AND I THOUGHT YOU WOULD MAKE A GREAT PROPRIETRESS TO REPRESENT KOGETSUAN.

YOU WERE AS BEAUTIFUL AS A BUTTERFLY...

...INTELLIGENT...

...YOU WERE NO BUTTERFLY...

BUT...

YOU'RE AN EVIL SNAKE...

...BENT ON SWALLOWING KOGETSUAN WHOLE.

I THOUGHT I WOULD LEAD A HAPPY LIFE, LOVED BY ITSUKI-SAN.

BACK THEN, I WAS FULL OF HOPE.

I SWORE...

THAT I WOULD DEVOTE MY LIFE TO HIM.

...

WHOSE FAULT...

DO YOU THINK THAT IS...?

HE NEVER EVEN TOUCHED ME...

BUT ITSUKI-SAN NEVER LOVED ME...

ONCE...

NOT EVEN...

YOU DIDN'T LOOK INTO IT, EITHER...

BECAUSE THERE WOULD BE TROUBLE IF TSUBAKI WASN'T YOUR REAL GRANDSON.

THEN...

TSUBAKI REALLY ISN'T—

YOU NEVER WANTED TO DEAL WITH THAT.

WHY...?

WHY MUST YOU TAKE EVERYTHING FROM ME?!

S-STOP...

I CAN'T LET YOU HAVE THIS!

THIS, THOUGH...

I JUST CAN'T!

WI—

HEY!

SHOVE

AHEM

AHEM

THUD

F...

FATH—!

NAO-SAN?

はっ
GASP

TSUBAKI-SAN.

I'LL PUT NEW CANDLES IN THE TEAROOM BEFORE THE SECOND HALF STARTS.

OH, THANKS.

THE OLD MASTER ISN'T IN THE TEAROOM.

HE SHOULD BE PREPARING FOR THE SECOND HALF HERE.

WHAT IS THIS...?

SOME-THING FEELS WRONG.

"...IN THAT ROOM..."

"AFTER THE TEA CEREMONY...

...THE OLD MASTER HAS ONE BOWL OF TEA..."

WAIT.

GULP

ゴクッ

BA-DUMP

KRAK

ミシ…

BA-DUMP

BA-DUMP

BA-DUMP

HURRY.

HURRY.

MOMMA...

I HAVE TO GO GET MOMMA.

CLATTER

CHAPTER 34 *Sakura*

...THAT YOU'LL DO A FINE JOB TAKING OVER THE SHOP...

...SOMEDAY.

PROMISE ME...

TSUBAKI...

WILL I NOT HAVE TO HEAR ALL THOSE VILE WORDS ANYMORE?

...WILL PEOPLE STOP THE MEAN GOSSIP?

IF I DO...

I...

ALWAYS BELIEVED THERE WAS HOPE.

WILL FATHER SHOW ME A REAL SMILE?

"THAT'S RIGHT."

"ARE YOU GOING TO HAVE TSUBAKI-KUN INHERIT KOGETSU-AN?"

"HE DOES. I'M NOT SURE IF ANYONE KNOWS HER REAL NAME."

"I HEARD..."

"...TSUBAKI CALLS HER 'SAKURA.'"

"LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY."

"I WANT HER TO..."

"—..."

WHAT?

NNF.

WHAT DID HE JUST SAY...?

TSU-BAKI-SAN.

GASP

OH, SURE.

THANK YOU.

CAN WE START PREPARING THE *HIGASHI* SOON?

HUH, I WONDER WHY NAO ISN'T BACK YET...

...

SHE'S TAKING A LONG TIME, ISN'T SHE?

WHY AM I SUDDENLY REMEMBERING ALL THAT...?

THERE'S NO ONE HERE.

WHAT'S GOING ON...?

MY, THESE LOOK TASTY.

HERE. PLEASE HAVE ONE.

IT'S BEEN A BIT OF A WAIT.

SHOULDN'T THE BREAK BE OVER?

...

WHOOSH

THAT'S RIGHT.

THAT DAY 15 YEARS AGO,
I DEFINITELY SAW HER.

A WOMAN, JUST STANDING THERE IN THE GARDEN FULL OF CAMELLIAS...

YOU...

WHY ARE YOU ...?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

...

WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TEA CEREMONY, MA'AM?

I'M AIRING THESE KIMONO OUT.

WE HAVE TO DO IT ONCE A YEAR, OR THE BUGS WILL EAT HOLES IN THEM IN NO TIME.

CAN'T YOU TELL?

I HEARD HE WAS STABBED TO DEATH...

...BY A CONFECTIONER HE WORKED WITH...

THIS ROOM...

IT WAS THE YOUNG MASTER'S, WASN'T IT?

A SENSELESS GRUDGE...

IT WAS WORK-RELATED.

...

THIS MIGHT BE MY CHANCE.

I...

...HEARD FROM ONE OF THE OLD REGULARS...

SHOULD YOU BE TELLING ME THIS?

ISN'T THE OFFICIAL STORY THAT HE DIED OF ILLNESS?

...THAT THEY WERE IN LOVE.

...THAT THE YOUNG MASTER AND THAT CONFEC-TIONER...

...WERE ON VERY GOOD TERMS...

I LOVE HIM.

I ALWAYS HAVE.

...GIVE ITSUKI-SAN BACK.

PLEASE...

...OUTH...

...

...

HOW DARE YOU SAY SUCH A THING!!

BAN

SHUT YOUR MOUTH!

GRAB

...!

WHUMP

!!

THE TEA CEREMONY ISN'T OVER YET.

WHY IS THE LOCK OPEN?

CREAK

"SHE LOVED HIM"?

"THEY LOVED EACH OTHER"...?

...

TELL ME...

DOES THAT...

GIVE THEM AN EXCUSE TO DO ANY-THING?

EVEN THOUGH HE VOWED TO SPEND HIS LIFE WITH ANOTHER WOMAN?

INITIALLY, I BELIEVED SHE HAD BEEN HIRED FOR HER SKILLS.

DID YOU MAKE THIS? IT'S AMAZING.

THANK YOU.

OH, MY! WHAT AN ADORABLE SWEET.

BUT IT WAS HER.

THEY RIPPED AWAY MY BEAUTIFUL WINGS AND TURNED ME INTO A WRETCHED BEAST.

THE TWO OF THEM...

...TORE MY HEART TO SHREDS.

SHE WAS THE VILE PEST NESTED IN ITSUKI-SAN'S HEART.

HAD THEY JUST COME TO ME WITH A TEARFUL APOLOGY...

...THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE END OF IT.

AND YET...

NEITHER OF THEM FACED ANY BLAME.

FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART...

I LOATHED THEM...

...RIGHT?

YOU SAW THAT.

THEY WERE ARGUING ...

ARE YOU SURE, TSUBAKI-SAN?!

YOU REALLY SAW THAT WOMAN IN THE ROOM?

NOD

Y...

YEAH ...

TELL ME YOU DID!

MOMMA!

MOMMA!!

GRAAA

WHAT'S WRONG?

...

I'M SORRY.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, JOJIMA?

...

DO YOU...

...SMELL THAT?

...

THAT'S WHY...

...YOU FRAMED HER...?

WERE YOU ALSO THE ONE WHO KILLED THE YOUNG MASTER?!

I'LL TESTIFY!

THAT I SAW YOU.

NO.

TELL ME THE TRUTH!

HA HA

YOU CAN'T PROVE ANYTHING!

WH... WHAT...

...DID YOU JUST SAY...?

YOUR MORNING GLORY TURNED OUT SO NICE!

NAO.

I CAN'T WAIT!

"*HASA-MIGIKU*"?

WHEN FALL COMES, LET'S MAKE *HASA-MIGIKU*.

THEN *FUKUUME* IN THE WINTER...

...AND *TSUJIURA*.

GOSHIKI-NAMA-GASHI EVEN, SOMEDAY.

Dear Nao,

It wasn't me.

I'M...

I'M
"SAKURA."

THE DAUGHTER...

...OF THE CONFECTIONER, YURIKO OKURA.

PFFT

CLAP
CLAP

THANK YOU, NAO-SAN.

YOU FINALLY SAID IT.

HA HA HA...

HA HA HA HA!

YOU HEARD THAT, DIDN'T YOU?

"I WANT HER TO..."

"I HEARD TSUBAKI CALLS HER 'SAKURA.'"

"...WITHOUT THE BURDEN OF THIS CURSED SHOP."

"...MAKE SWEETS AS SHE PLEASES..."

I HAD ALWAYS BELIEVED IN HOPE.

CHAPTER 35 *The Whereabouts of Happiness*

TSUBAKI...

WHAT?

WHAT'S ALL THAT COM-MOTION?

WHERE'S THE SOURCE?!

WE DON'T KNOW, BUT WE HAVE TO GET OUT!

FIRE!

A FIRE...?!

WILL

SST...

TSUBAKI-SAN, SAVE THIS FOR LATER AND GO BACK!!

I'LL GO SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING.

"SAKURA"?

...JUST SAY...

THAT YOU'RE...

DID YOU...

ANSWER ME.

YOU'RE LYING... RIGHT...?

I CAN'T...

KEEP THIS FROM HIM ANYMORE.

I WANTED TO KNOW...

...WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN THIS ROOM...

...THAT DAY...

...15 YEARS AGO.

I SWEAR...

MOMMA ...

...DIDN'T KILL THE YOUNG MASTER.

I CAME HERE...

...TO PROVE HER INNOCENCE.

THIS TASTE...

I THINK I REMEMBER IT FROM SOMEWHERE...

NO.

NOT NAO.

NAO CAN'T BE SAKURA.

ALL OF IT...

ALL OF IT...

WHAT YOU SAID BEFORE THE HANGING SCROLL...

THAT WAS A LIE, TOO...

NOT "SAKURA."

I'M NAO HANAOKA.

ALL OF IT!!

WHAM!

TSUBAKI
...

WHY...?

NGH...!

NNF...

ALL THIS TIME...

YOU NEVER...

...FELT ANYTHING, HUH?

AK...

HF...

OH...

...I SAW THAT DAY...

IT'S THOSE SAME EYES...

SLAM

YOU'RE WRO—

TSUBAKI-SAN.

IT'S...

IT'S AN EMER-GENCY!

WHAT'S WRONG?

THERE'S A FIRE!

THE ENTIRE HOUSE IS FILLED WITH SMOKE...!

EVERYONE GOT OUT,

BUT WE CAN'T FIND THE OLD MASTER ANYWHERE...!

I'LL GO LOOK FOR HIM!

YAMAGUCHI-SAN, YOU TAKE CARE OF THE SHOP!

DID YOU CHECK THERE?!

WHAT ABOUT HIS ROOM?!

THE SMOKE IN THE MAIN HOUSE IS TOO THICK TO REACH THAT ROOM!

TSU-
BAKI!

I'LL BE BACK ONCE I FIND THE OLD MASTER.

YOU STAY RIGHT HERE.

IF THERE'S SOMETHING YOU WANT TO TELL ME,

TELL ME THEN.

"YOU CAN RUN AWAY IF YOU WANT."

"BUT IF YOU DO..."

TSUBAKI'S TESTING ME...

I'LL BE...

...WAITING FOR YOU RIGHT HERE, TSUBAKI.

I'LL WAIT.

"I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN."

ACTU-
ALLY...

THERE'S NO ONE LEFT INSIDE, IS THERE?

...TSUBAKI-SAN AND NAO-SAN ARE STILL—

TSUBAKI-SAN'S IN THERE?!

THIS IS AWFUL..

WHERE ARE THE FIRE TRUCKS?!

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN...?

THEN... TSUBAKI WILL INHERIT THE SHOP...

...AND IT WILL BE MY VICTORY.

ONCE THE OLD MASTER'S GONE, NO ONE WILL KNOW WHAT I DID.

NGH ...!

GRAND-FATHER, ARE YOU HERE?!

GRAND-FATHER !!

THE MAIN HOUSE...

IT'S NO GOOD.

THERE'S TOO MUCH SMOKE TO GO ANY FURTHER.

COUGH

COUGH

COUGH

WHOOSH

!!

...ONE...

SOME...

THAT WAS DEFINITELY GRANDFATHER'S VOICE...

SOME..

...ONE...

...!

HELP...

ME...

NAO-SAN?!

WHO KNOWS WHEN THE FLAMES WILL GET HERE, TOO?!

YOU HAVE TO GET OUT!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

I HAVE TO WAIT FOR TSUBAKI.

I'M STAYING RIGHT HERE.

NAO-SAN?!

I KNOW TSUBAKI'S NOT GOING TO FORGIVE ME.

ALL THIS TIME...

...YOU NEVER FELT ANYTHING, HUH?

AND I LIKED HIM BACK.

BUT...I FELT TSUBAKI'S LOVE EVERY TIME HE KISSED ME.

I HAVE TO TELL HIM THAT, AT LEAST...

...BEFORE I LOSE HIM FOREVER...

I CAN'T GET THERE...

MY THROAT BURNS...

I CAN'T BREATHE...

THUD

Tsubaki.

Tsubaki.

I ALWAYS FEARED...

...THIS DAY MIGHT COME.

AH...

I SEE.

SAKURA...

YOU'VE COME TO TAKE EVERYTHING FROM ME.

THAT...

...WAS ALL PART OF HER ACT TO DECEIVE ME...

OF COURSE.

IN HER EYES...

...I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR HER MOTHER'S DEATH.

TSUBAKI-SAN CARES ABOUT THIS SHOP...

AS MUCH AS YOU DO, SIR.

...GIVE ME THE WORDS I NEEDED THE MOST...?

SO WHY...

IT'S NO PROB-LEM. WE'LL DO IT.

DON'T WORRY.

THERE'S TWO OF US FOOLS.

WHY DID SHE ALWAYS...

HE'S TRUE TO HIS HEART.

CAN I REALLY AFFORD TO LET HER GO?

NAO...

DO YOU WANT TO MARRY ME?

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER...

I THOUGHT I HAD FOUND IT.

NAO...

NAO...

...I HAD FOUND HAPPI-NESS.

KRAKRK

カリラリ

CLATTER

CLATTER

...

NAO-SAN, COME ON!

THROB

NO...

TSUBAKI-SAN!!

OW...!

NO.

THROB

THROB

ANYTHING BUT THAT...!

PLEASE...

HURRY.

HURRY AND COME BACK.

TSUBAKI...

NAO-SAN?!

CHAPTER 36 *Flames Subside*

NAO-CHAN?!

NO!

WAIT...

QUICK, LET'S GET OUT.

WHAT'S WRONG?!

SHE JUST COL-LAPSED...

I DON'T KNOW!

I HAVE TO WAIT FOR TSUBAKI TO COME...

ポ
FLIP

ポ
FLIP

FSSSHHHH

NONE OF US CAN ESCAPE...

...THE CURSE OF KOGETSUAN...

TWO DAYS LATER

KANAZAWA CITY GO HOSPITAL

FF

NAO?!

THANK GOD.

YU...

KO-SAN...

YOU CAME TO.

NAO!

YES, SHE JUST WOKE UP.

CAN YOU GET THE DOCTOR, PLEASE?

IT'S HANAOKA IN ROOM 302.

UM!

WHAT ABOUT THE HOUSE? AND KOGETSUAN?!

WAIT, THAT'S RIGHT...!

I...

I CAN'T BELIEVE...

YOU GOT CAUGHT IN A FIRE!

TSU-BAKI...

H-HEY, YOU SHOULDN'T TAKE THAT OFF WITHOUT ASKING.

I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE OKAY.

"FIRE"...?

THEY PUT THE FIRE OUT IN ABOUT AN HOUR,

AND THE SHOP WAS SPARED.

THOUGH I HEARD THE MAIN HOUSE BURNED DOWN COMPLETELY.

...

WHAT ABOUT TSUBAKI?!

...THEY SAID THAT NO ONE DIED IN THAT FIRE.

BUT...

...ABOUT TSUBAKI-SAN...

I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS...

"FINE"...

OH, GOOD ...

ズキ

ズキ

THROB

OW!!

HE SHOULD BE FINE.

U...

UM...

WHAT ABOUT... THE BABY...?

W...

WELL...

JUST TRY... TO GET SOME REST FIRST...

OKAY?

OF COURSE.

WHO WOULD WANT A MOM LIKE ME...

...RIGHT?

...

...

SO...

...THE BABY DIDN'T MAKE IT...

SQUEEZE ギュ

I SWEAR IT ISN'T.

NO!

THIS ISN'T ANYONE'S FAULT!

Scroll: *Fumôgokai,* "Thou shall not have a dishonest soul."

I THINK IT'S BETTER FOR NAO-SAN TO LEAVE KOGETSUAN FOR GOOD.

IF SHE GOES BACK...

...SHE'LL JUST GET HURT ALL OVER AGAIN.

THE HEAVENS...

...ARE PUNISHING ME...

WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW...?

...

TSUBAKI...

WERE YOU RELIEVED TO FIND ME GONE?

OR WERE YOU—?

DID YOU EVER COME BACK TO THE ROOM, TSUBAKI?

It's been three days since the fire at Kogetsuan...

...and local residents are lamenting the loss of the main house, which was a famous historical structure.

IT'S TIME TO EAT.

HANAOKA-SAN.

IS THAT THE NEWS?

survived the fire, as well.

The molds and tools designated as cultural assets by the city...

I hope they can get back to business soon.

But at least the shop was all right.

I always buy sweets there.

OH...

Here they are.

The young master saved them...

...at the risk of his own life.

It's a blessing we didn't lose these in the fire.

They're very im-portant...

and have been passed down for generations.

I'M GOING BACK IN!

I LEFT SOMETHING IMPORTANT BEHIND!

TSUBAKI-SAN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

...ONLY THE OFFICIAL HEIR GETS TO USE...

THE TOOLS...

TSUBAKI...

CHOSE TO PROTECT THEM...

カラン
CLATTER

NAO-CHAN.

I SCORED SOME *MAME-DAIFUKU* FROM KURINDO!

Man, I was in line forever!

...

whew...

NAO-
CHAN.

MOMMA...

I EVEN FOUND OUT...

...THAT SHE WAS THE ONE WHO FRAMED YOU...

...BUT THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT.

I'M SORRY.

I DIDN'T ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING...

SORR—

...!

ARE YOU HUNGRY?

KANOKO...

BUT...

I'M NOT REALLY...

THANKS.

HEY...

WOULD YOU LIKE ONE?

...

...

...EET.

IT'S SO...
SWEET...

NAO-
CHAN.

I...
IT'S...

...REALLY
TASTY...

EVER SINCE...

...THAT MOMENT...

BUT THIS *WAGASHI* ...

WHY...?

I...

I COULDN'T TASTE ANY OF MY FOOD EARLIER...

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO NOW?

NAO-CHAN...

THE THING...

THE ONLY THING...

...I'VE EVER REALLY WANTED TO DO...

DO YOU WANT TO...

...GO BACK TO KOGETSU-AN?

I WANT TO MAKE SWEETS.

...TO THOSE INNOCENT DAYS.

I WANT TO GO BACK...

EVERY ONE I FINISHED MADE ME SO INCREDIBLY HAPPY.

I WAS SO EXCITED ABOUT MAKING SWEETS.

ALL THAT MATTERED...

...WAS MY LOVE FOR WAGASHI.

I'LL FORGET ABOUT IT ALL.

IT'S OKAY.

I'M SURE.

I CAN DO IT.

I'M SURE OF IT...

I'M SURE I'LL HAVE MY CHIN UP BY THEN.

...I'LL MAKE WINTER PLUM BLOSSOM NERIKIRI IN PURE WHITE, LIKE I ALWAYS DO.

WHEN THE SNOWS COME THIS YEAR...

THREE YEARS LATER

...AND THE BEAN PASTE IS SMOOTH ON THE PALATE...

SUCH REFINED SWEET-NESS...

THE SAMI-DARETEI TEA HOUSE

WELL, THEN ...

WILL YOU ENTRUST KOGETSUAN TO MAKE ALL THE SWEETS...

TO BE SERVED AT YOUR TEA HOUSE FOR THE COMING YEAR?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

I CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON THE QUALITY OF KOGETSU-AN'S SWEETS.

I'M NOT SURPRISED.

WHAT?!

B...

BUT WHY?!

I'M VERY SORRY, BUT WE CHOSE ANOTHER PLACE.

ACTU-ALLY...

I THINK...

...

IT'S A SHOP THAT MAKES VERY INTERESTING SWEETS.

...IT'S CALLED "HANAGASUMI."

WHAT IS IT CALLED?

THE MASTER HAS TAKEN QUITE A LIKING TO IT.

HANA...

...GASUMI...

You're right!

THAT ONE...

HAS A DIFFERENT COLOR FOR EACH OF THE *MOMIJI** LEAVES INSIDE.

WOW, LOOK AT THIS!

IT'S SO PRETTY!

*The Japanese Maple

SAMIDARETEI CHOSE US...

...TO MAKE THEIR SWEETS.

ALL RIGHT.

AREN'T YOU HAPPY ABOUT THAT?

DO YOU THINK TSUBAKI-KUN WILL REALIZE ...

...THEY'RE YOUR SWEETS?

...

BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER.

SHIFF

PROBA-BLY.

WELL, I KNEW THEY WOULD.

BECAUSE I'M GOING TO PUT AN END...

...TO KOGETSUAN AS HE KNOWS IT.

To be continued in Volume 8.

VOLUME

8

NEVER GOING BACK.

I QUITE LIKE IT THIS WAY.

She was nowhere to be found.

I PROMISE I'LL MAKE HER HAPPY.

A PATH FILLED WITH THORNS.

PART II OF THE SERIES BEGINS.

A story of love, fate, and *wagashi*

Something's Wrong With Us

8

Natsumi Ando

Is it love, or hatred?

THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT.

Coming soon!

Translation Notes

jo-namagashi, cover flap
Fresh, artistic wagashi that are made with specific (usually seasonal) motifs.

wagashi, cover flap
Traditional Japanese confections.

ayuyaki, page 4
A sweet shaped like an *ayu* (sweetfish) made of soft *mochi* (rice cake) wrapped in a thin pancake.

Tsubaki-san, page 7
In very formal households like the Takatsuki family, the mother will often address her children with the "-san" honorific. "-san" is akin to "Mr., Ms., Mx." etc.

teishu from the Sokunkai, page 21
In volume 3, the Sokunkai is introduced as one of the most prominent schools of tea in Kanazawa, and in volume 4, Tsubaki and Nao make sweets for the *teishu,* the host of one of their tea ceremonies.

kinton, page 47
A popular type of *jo-namagashi* that consists of a ball of bean paste covered in strands of colored bean paste, giving it a "fuzzy" appearance.

uchimizu, page 47
The practice of splashing water onto the pavement when the weather gets hot, usually right outside the front door. It not only cools the area down, but also aims to purify the space out of consideration to visitors.

furo season, page 64
The tea ceremony's summer season that stretches from May until October. A *furo,* or small charcoal brazier, is used when boiling water to keep the heat away from guests. In contrast, a *ro,* or sunken hearth, is used during the winter months (*ro* season) to keep guests warm.

yellow bean paste, page 72
A mixture of white bean paste and egg yolk.

omogashi, page 75
The main sweet served before thick green tea in a tea ceremony to prepare the palate for the tea's bitter taste.

Kaga Domain, page 79
Prior to the Meiji Restoration, when much of Japan was westernized, the country was separated into feudal domains ruled by lords. The Kaga Domain covered what is now Ishikawa Prefecture and Toyama Prefecture.

higashi, page 94
Literally "dried sweets," *higashi* have very little moisture and keep for longer than *namagashi* (fresh sweets).

hasamigiku, page 110
A delicate chrysanthemum (*kiku*) motif made by cutting each petal out with a special pair of clippers, or *hasami*.

fukuume, page 110
Literally "auspicious plum," these *monaka* (bean paste in a wafer shell) are shaped like plum blossoms and come in pink and white for good fortune. A traditional New Year's *wagashi* particular to Kanazawa, where this story takes place.

tsujiura, page 110
Small sweets with fortune slips inside. Materials vary, and they can be made with candy or *monaka* material. Another traditional New Year's sweet particular to Kanazawa.

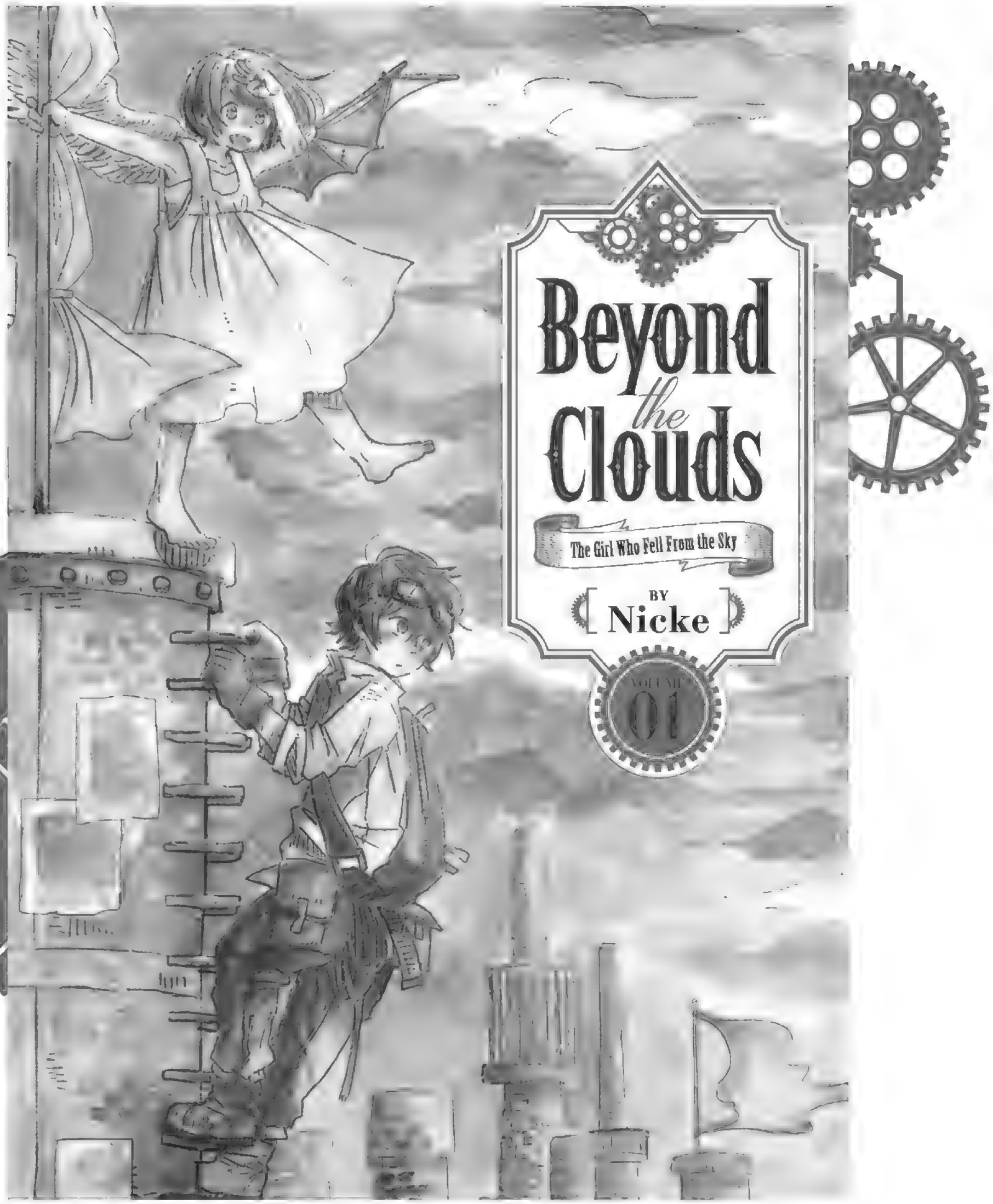
Goshiki-namagashi, page 110
An essential wedding gift in the Kanazawa area. Fresh sweets in five colors are arranged in a box, each type representing a major natural element such as the sun or the moon.

mamedaifuku, page 159
Mochi with salted beans and a bean paste filling. Although relatively common, some shops are particularly famous for their *mamedaifuku,* which sell out in a matter of hours and result in long lines.

kanoko, page 162
Meaning "fawn," this sweet has syrup-infused beans covering a ball of bean paste to look like the mottled pattern on a baby deer.

nerikiri, page 169
The most iconic type of *jo-namagashi* made with a mix of white bean paste and glutinous rice flour. The paste can be colored and shaped into all kinds of seasonal motifs.

Young characters and steampunk setting, like *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Battle Angel Alita*



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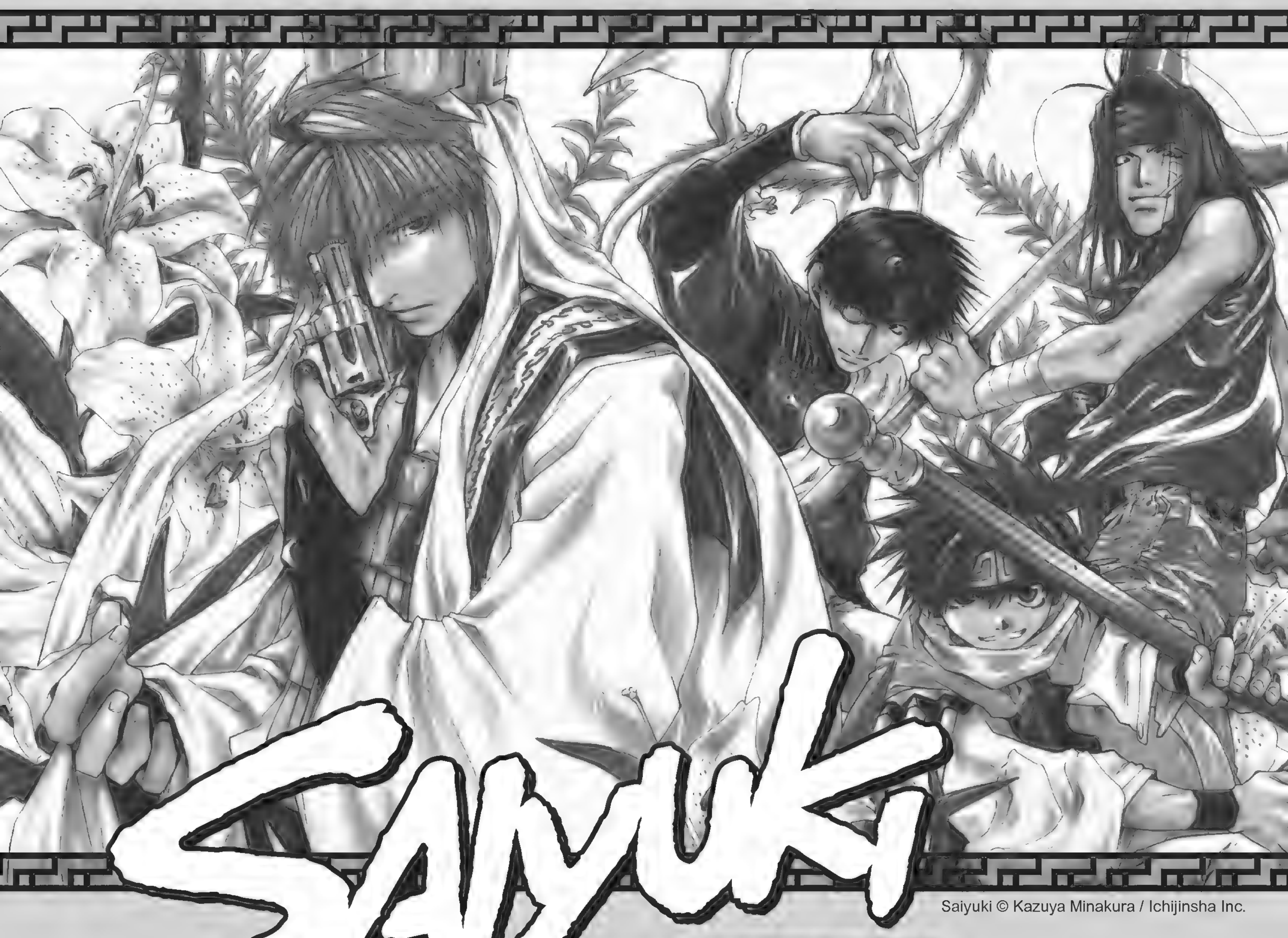
— Publishers Weekly

Chobits © CLAMP·ShigatsuTsuitachi CO.,LTD./Kodansha Ltd.

Poor college student Hideki is down on his luck. All he wants is a good job, a girlfriend, and his very own "persocom"—the latest and greatest in humanoid computer technology. Hideki's luck changes one night when he finds Chi—a persocom thrown out in a pile of trash. But Hideki soon discovers that there's much more to his cute new persocom than meets the eye.

KC KODANSHA COMICS

The boys are back, in 400-page hardcovers that are as pretty and badass as they are!



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KC KODANSHA COMICS

"AN EDGY COMIC LOOK AT AN ANCIENT CHINESE TALE." —YALSA

Genjo Sanzo is a Buddhist priest in the city of Togenkyo, which is being ravaged by yokai spirits that have fallen out of balance with the natural order. His superiors send him on a journey far to the west to discover why this is happening and how to stop it. His companions are three yokai with human souls. But this is no day trip — the four will encounter many discoveries and horrors on the way.

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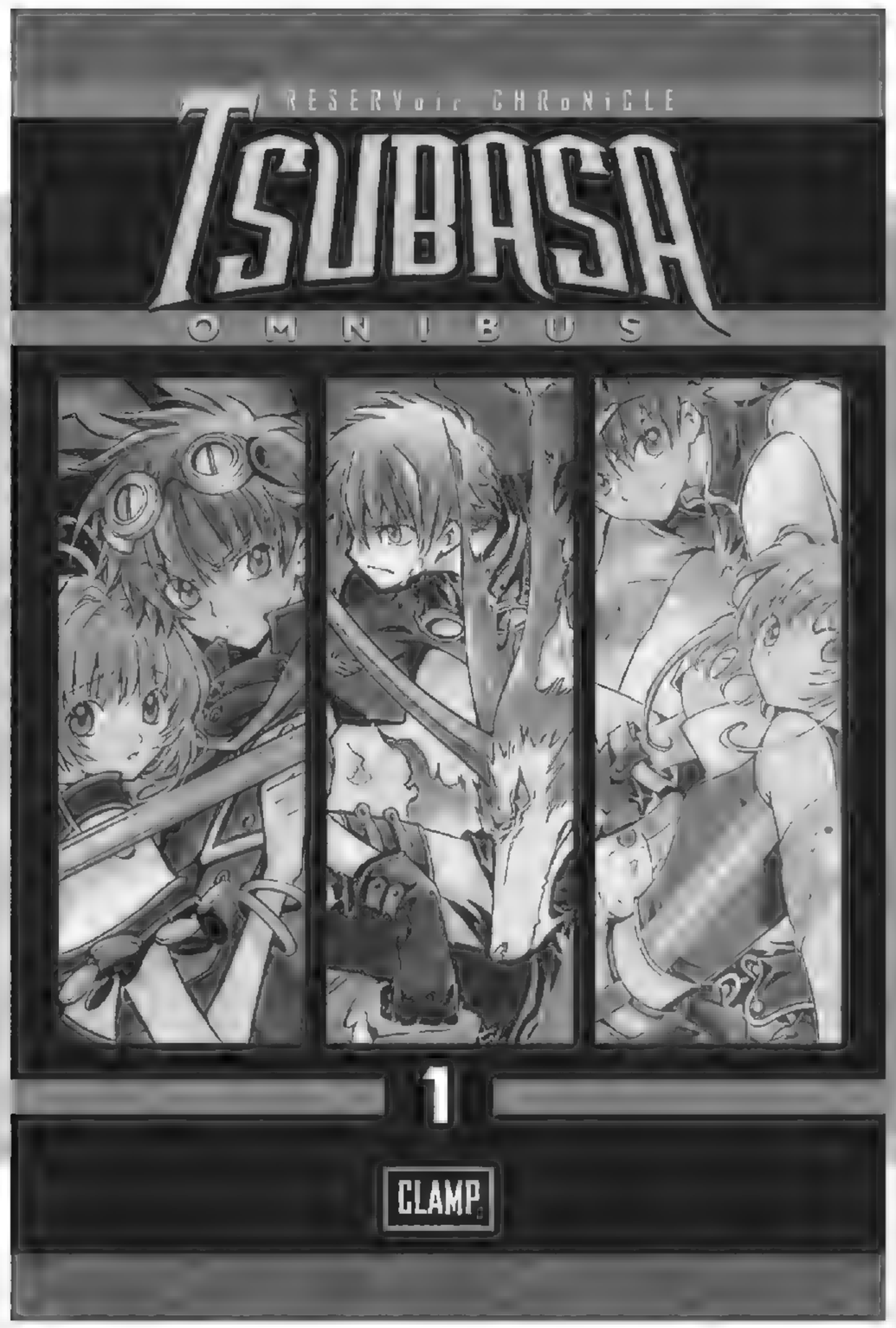


"[*Tsubasa*] takes readers on a fantastic ride that only gets more exhilarating with each successive chapter." —Anime News Network

In the Kingdom of Clow, an archaeological dig unleashes an incredible power, causing Princess Sakura to lose her memories. To save her, her childhood friend Syaoran must follow the orders of the Dimension Witch and travel alongside Kurogane, an unrivaled warrior; Fai, a powerful magician; and Mokona, a curiously strange creature, to retrieve Sakura's dispersed memories!

KC KODANSHA COMICS

A SMART, NEW ROMANTIC COMEDY FOR FANS OF *SHORTCAKE CAKE* AND *TERRACE HOUSE*!

Living-Room Matsunaga-san © Keiko Iwashita / Kodansha Ltd.

KC KODANSHA COMICS

A romance manga starring high school girl Meeko, who learns to live on her own in a boarding house whose living room is home to the odd (but handsome) Matsunaga-san. She begins to adjust to her new life away from her parents, but Meeko soon learns that no matter how far away from home she is, she's still a young girl at heart — especially when she finds herself falling for Matsunaga-san.

The adorable new odd-couple cat comedy manga from the creator of the beloved *Chi's Sweet Home*, in full color!

Praise for *Chi's Sweet Home*

"Nearly impossible to turn away... a true all-ages title that anyone, young or old, cat lover or not, will enjoy. The stories will bring a smile to your face and warm your heart."

—School Library Journal

Sue & Tai-chan

Konami Kanata

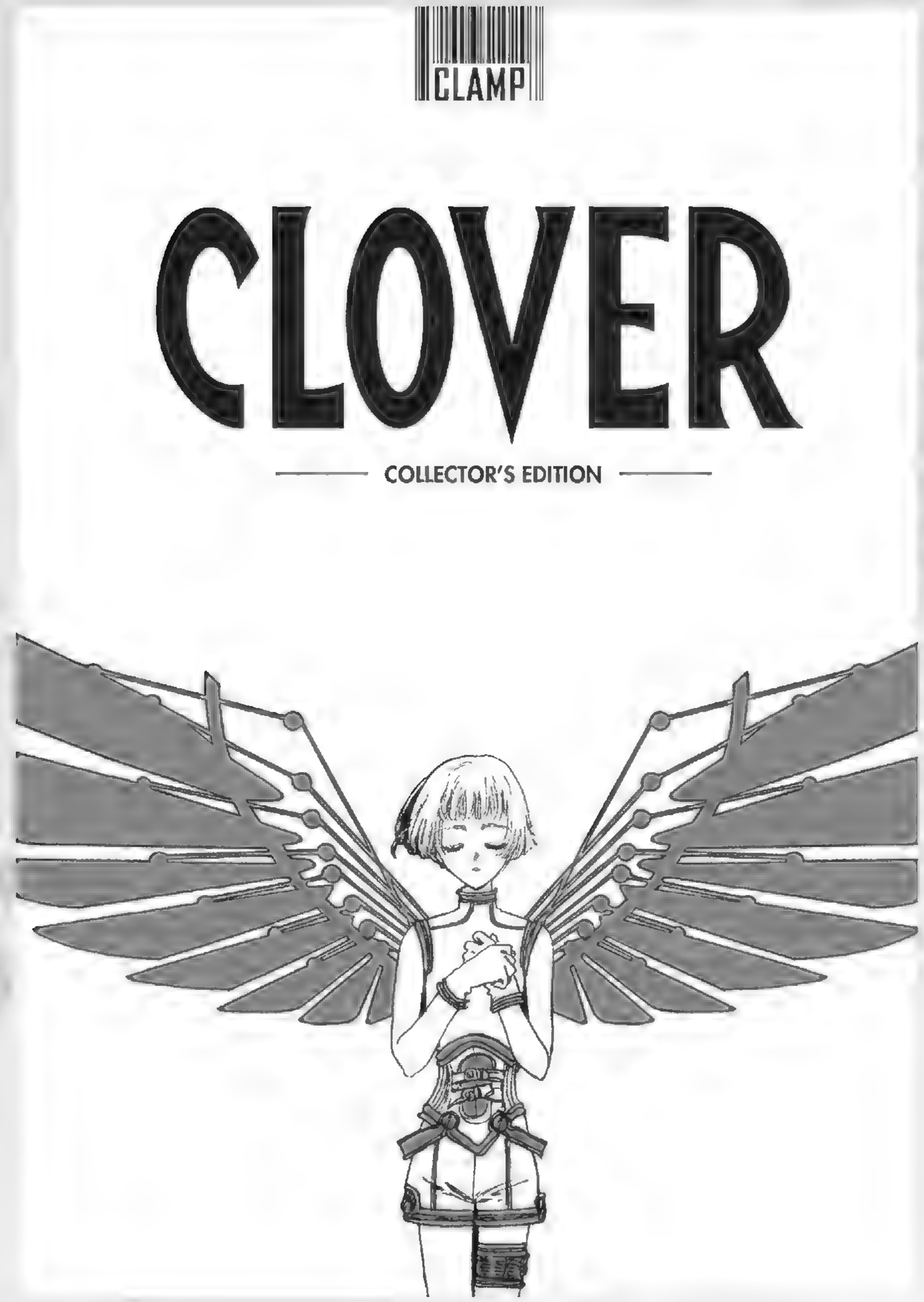
Sue is an aging housecat who's looking forward to living out her life in peace... but her plans change when the mischievous black tomcat Tai-chan enters the picture! Hey! Sue never signed up to be a catsitter! *Sue & Tai-chan* is the latest from the reigning meow-narch of cute kitty comics, Konami Kanata.

Sue & Tai-chan © Konami Kanata/Kodansha Ltd.

KC KODANSHA COMICS

The art-deco cyberpunk classic from the creators of *xxxHOLiC* and *Cardcaptor Sakura*!

"Starred Review. This experimental sci-fi work from CLAMP reads like a romantic version of *AKIRA*."
—Publishers Weekly



Su was born into a bleak future, where the government keeps tight control over children with magical powers—codenamed "Clovers." With Su being the only "four-leaf" Clover in the world, she has been kept isolated nearly her whole life. Can ex-military agent Kazuhiko deliver her to the happiness she seeks? Experience the complete series in this hardcover edition, which also includes over twenty pages of ravishing color art!

KC KODANSHA COMICS

THE SWEET SCENT OF LOVE IS IN THE AIR! FOR FANS OF OFFBEAT ROMANCES LIKE WOTAKOI

Sweat and Soap © Kintetsu Yamada / Kodansha Ltd.

In an office romance, there's a fine line between sexy and awkward... and that line is where Asako — a woman who sweats copiously — meets Koutarou — a perfume developer who can't get enough of Asako's, er, scent. Don't miss a romcom manga like no other!

KC KODANSHA COMICS

CUTE ANIMALS AND LIFE LESSONS, PERFECT FOR ASPIRING PET VETS OF ALL AGES!

Yuzu the Pet Vet © Mingo Ito / NIPPON COLUMBIA CO., LTD./ Kodansha LTD.

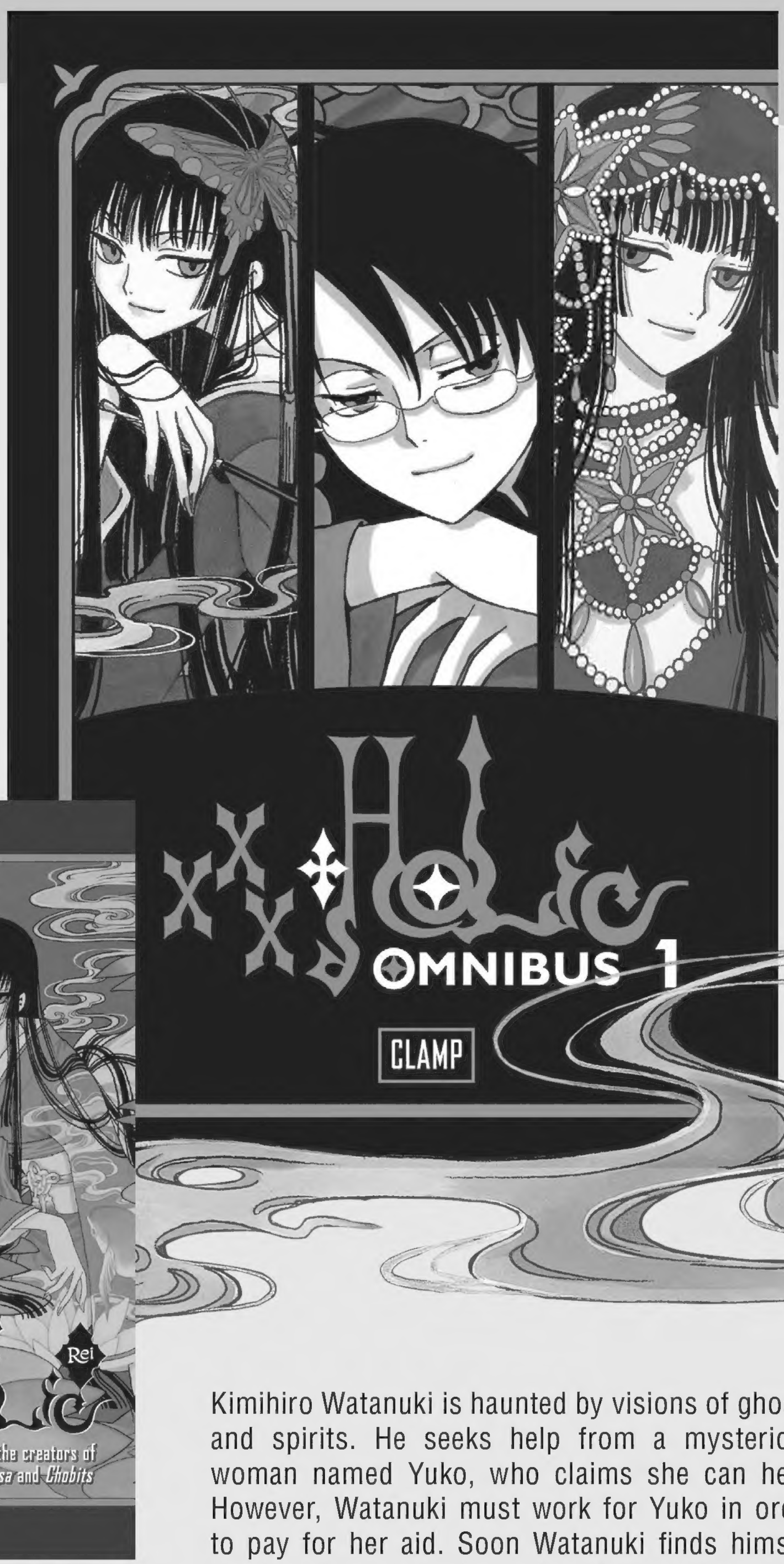
For an 11-year-old, Yuzu has a lot on her plate. When her mom gets sick and has to be hospitalized, Yuzu goes to live with her uncle who runs the local veterinary clinic. Yuzu's always been scared of animals, but she tries to help out. Through all the tough moments in her life, Yuzu realizes that she can help make things all right with a little help from her animal pals, peers, and kind grown-ups.

Every new patient is a furry friend in the making!

"Clever, sassy, and original....*xxxHOLiC* has the inherent hallmarks of a runaway hit."
—NewType magazine

Beautifully seductive artwork and uniquely Japanese depictions of the supernatural will hypnotize CLAMP fans!

xxxHOLiC © CLAMP·ShigatsuTsuitachi CO.,LTD./Kodansha Ltd.
xxxHOLiC Rei © CLAMP·ShigatsuTsuitachi CO.,LTD./Kodansha Ltd.



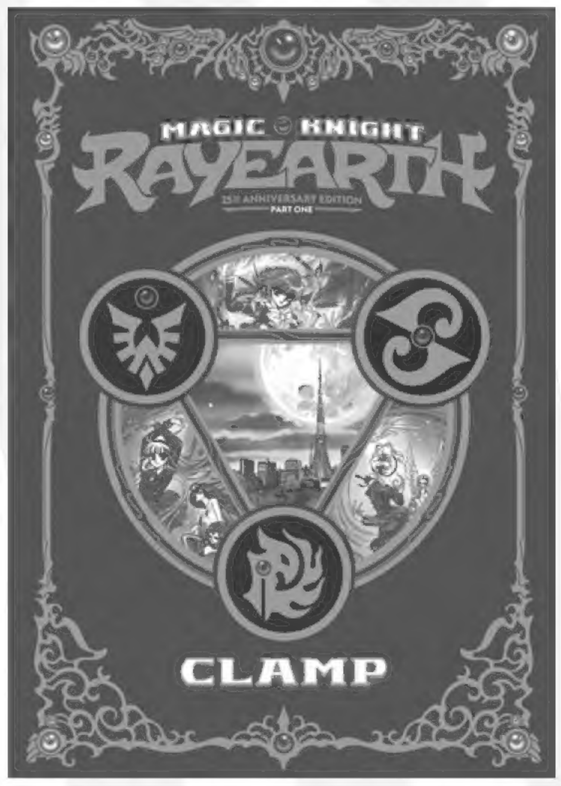
Kimihiro Watanuki is haunted by visions of ghosts and spirits. He seeks help from a mysterious woman named Yuko, who claims she can help. However, Watanuki must work for Yuko in order to pay for her aid. Soon Watanuki finds himself employed in Yuko's shop, where he sees things and meets customers that are stranger than anything he could have ever imagined.

KC KODANSHA COMICS

THE WORLD OF CLAMP!

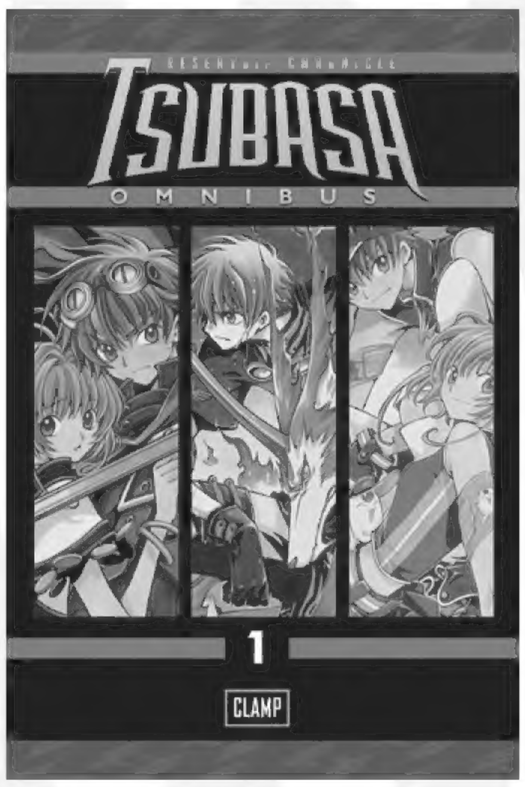
Cardcaptor Sakura
Collector's Edition

Cardcaptor Sakura:
Clear Card



Magic Knight Rayearth
25th Anniversary Box Set

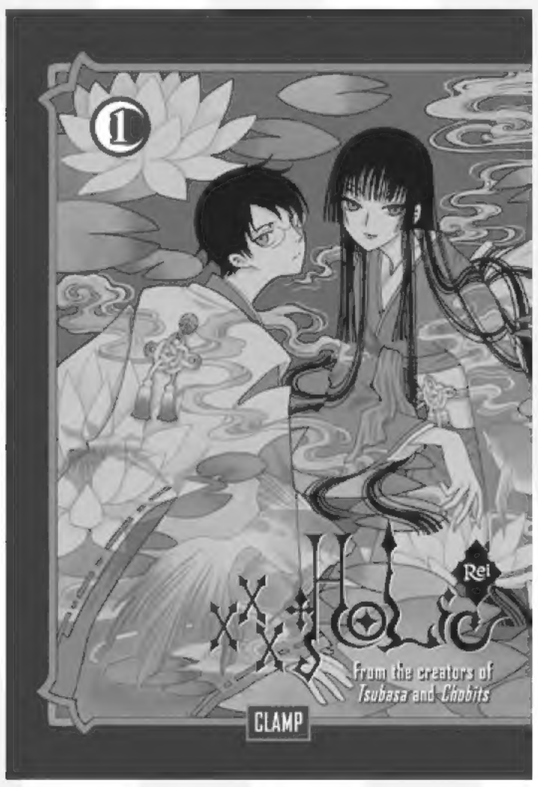
Chobits



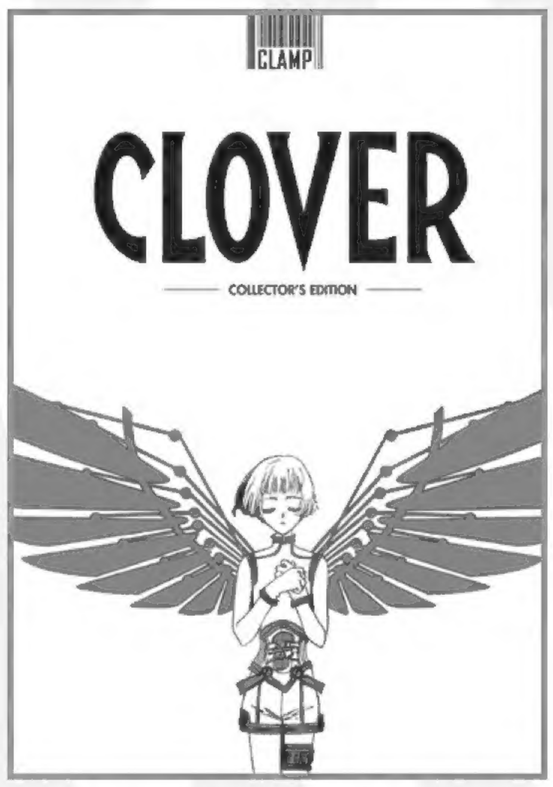
TSUBASA Omnibus

TSUBASA WoRLD CHRoNiCLE

xxxHOLiC Omnibus



xxxHOLiC Rei

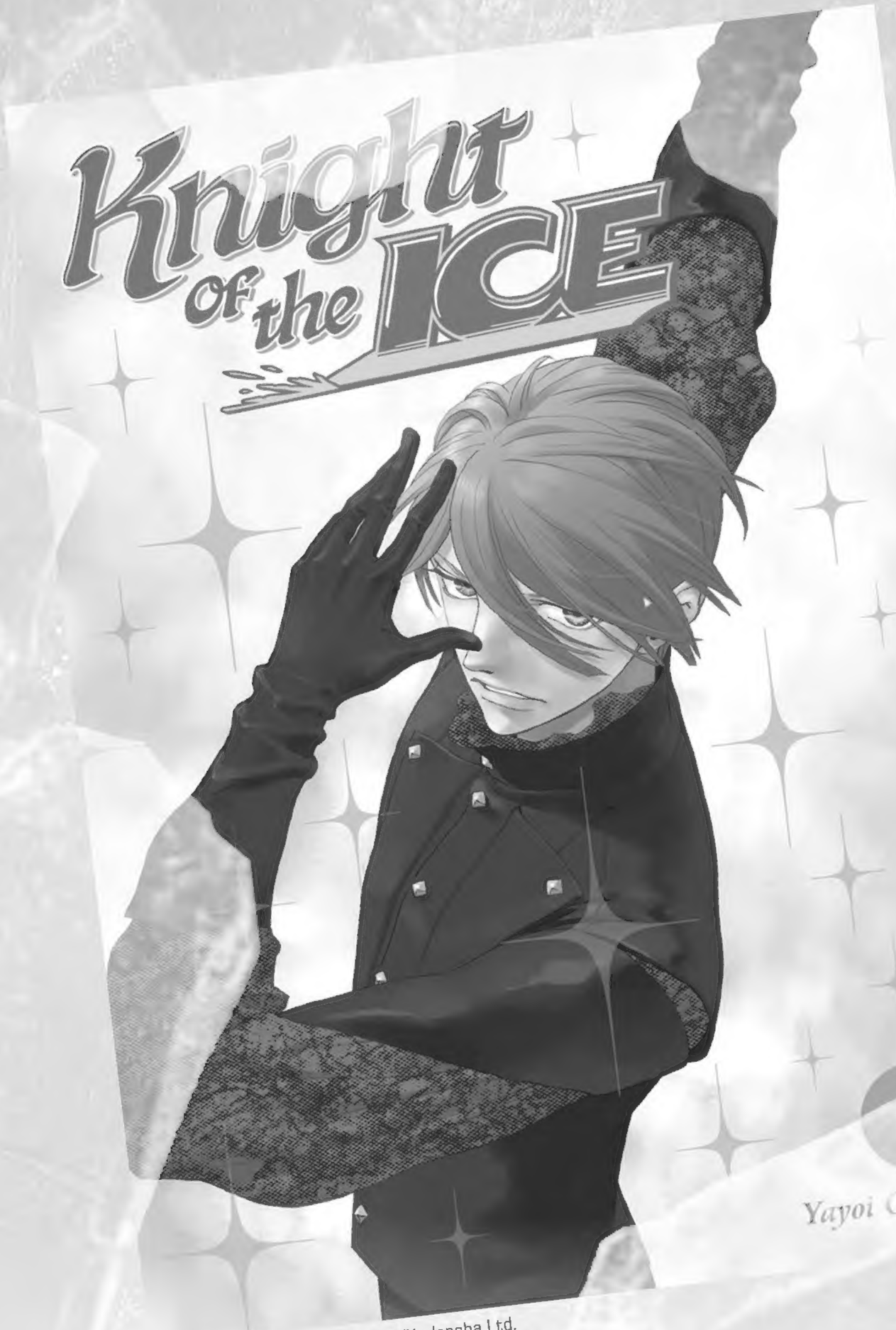


CLOVER Collector's Edition

KC KODANSHA COMICS

Kodansha Comics welcomes you to explore the expansive world of CLAMP, the all-female artist collective that has produced some of the most acclaimed manga of the century. Our growing catalog includes icons like *Cardcaptor Sakura* and *Magic Knight Rayearth*, each crafted with CLAMP's one-of-a-kind style and characters!

© CLAMP·ShigatsuTsuitachi CO.,LTD./Kodansha Ltd.



Knight of the Ice ©Yayoi Ogawa/Kodansha Ltd.

SKATING THRILLS AND ICY CHILLS WITH THIS NEW TINGLY ROMANCE SERIES!

A rom-com on ice, perfect for fans of *Princess Jellyfish* and *Wotakoi*. Kokoro is the talk of the figure-skating world, winning trophies and hearts. But little do they know... he's actually a huge nerd! From the beloved creator of *You're My Pet* (*Tramps Like Us*).

Chitose is a serious young woman, working for the health magazine *SASSO*. Or at least, she would be, if she wasn't constantly getting distracted by her childhood friend, international figure skating star Kokoro Kijinami! In the public eye and on the ice, Kokoro is a gallant, flawless knight, but behind his glittery costumes and breathtaking spins lies a secret: He's actually a hopelessly romantic otaku, who can only land his quad jumps when Chitose is on hand to recite a spell from his favorite magical girl anime!

KC KODANSHA COMICS

Something's Wrong With Us 7

Kodansha Digital Edition

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